2335 The Platinum Rule

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The Golden Rule has no place in hospitality.

Treat others the way you want to be treated — it sounds right, it feels generous, and it produces an operation centered on the wrong person. The cast member who applies the Golden Rule to every Guest is treating every Guest like themselves. The operator who manages every cast member by the Golden Rule is managing everyone like themselves. The rule is generous in intent and structurally wrong in application — because it never asks what the other person actually needs. It asks what you would need. Those are not the same question.

The Platinum Rule: treat others the way they want to be treated.

One word. The entire gap between service and hospitality.

Servant leadership sounds like the Platinum Rule. It is not the same thing.

Greenleaf's servant-leader is servant first — driven by a natural feeling that one wants to serve, prioritizing others' growth and well-being, asking "do those served grow as persons?" That is a posture. A motivation. A commitment to the other person's development. It is genuinely different from the leader-first model and it is not nothing.

But it never asks the leader to read what the specific person in front of them actually needs before responding. The servant-leader decides what serving means — from the inside out — and then serves with humility and commitment. The ten characteristics of servant leadership include empathy and listening. None of them say: stop, read this person, determine what they specifically need right now, and respond to that. The frame is still leader-centered in its orientation. The servant-leader is virtuous. The Platinum Rule is accurate.

Virtue without reading produces the wrong response with good intentions. The Guest who wants to be left alone and the cast member who needs direct feedback rather than encouragement are not served by a leader who decided in advance what serving looks like. They are served by a leader who read them first.

The Platinum Rule does not replace servant leadership's commitment to others. It sharpens it. The best servant-leaders are already running the Platinum Rule — they just have not named it. The

ones who are not are performing service rather than delivering it.

The Platinum Rule requires reading first. You cannot treat someone the way they want to be treated if you have not read what they want. The Guest who wants efficiency and the Guest who wants conversation are both right. The cast member who applies the same template to both has missed one of them. The operator who manages every cast member identically has missed most of them. The kitchen manager who runs the line the same way regardless of who is on it that night has missed the shift.

This is not a Guest-only discipline. It runs across every actor-to-actor interaction in the operation. Operator to cast. Cast to Guest. Kitchen manager to cast. Lead to trainer. Trainer to new cast member. Every relationship in the building is a Platinum Rule situation — every person has something they need from the interaction, and the discipline of reading what that is before responding is what separates a relational operation from a transactional one.

The transactional operation applies rules uniformly. The relational operation reads the person in front of it and responds to that person. Rules are efficient. Reading is effective. The Platinum Rule is why effectiveness beats efficiency in this business every time the stakes are real.

What every actor in the building wants — regardless of role, regardless of experience level, regardless of the shift they are having — is to feel like they matter specifically. Not generically well-managed. Specifically seen. The operator's job is to read the cast member in front of them and respond to what that person needs to perform at their best tonight. The cast member's job is to read the Guest. The kitchen manager's job is to read the line. The read is universal. The discipline is the same at every altitude.

The Platinum Rule is the operating frame that makes [The Read] worth running. Without it, the read produces information the operator never uses because they are going to apply the same template regardless. With it, the read directly shapes the response — because the response was always going to be specific to the person being read.

Pairs with: [The Read], [Role As Verb], [Guest Experience], [Point Of Experience], [By Design Or By Default].